THE ATHEIST'S JESUS

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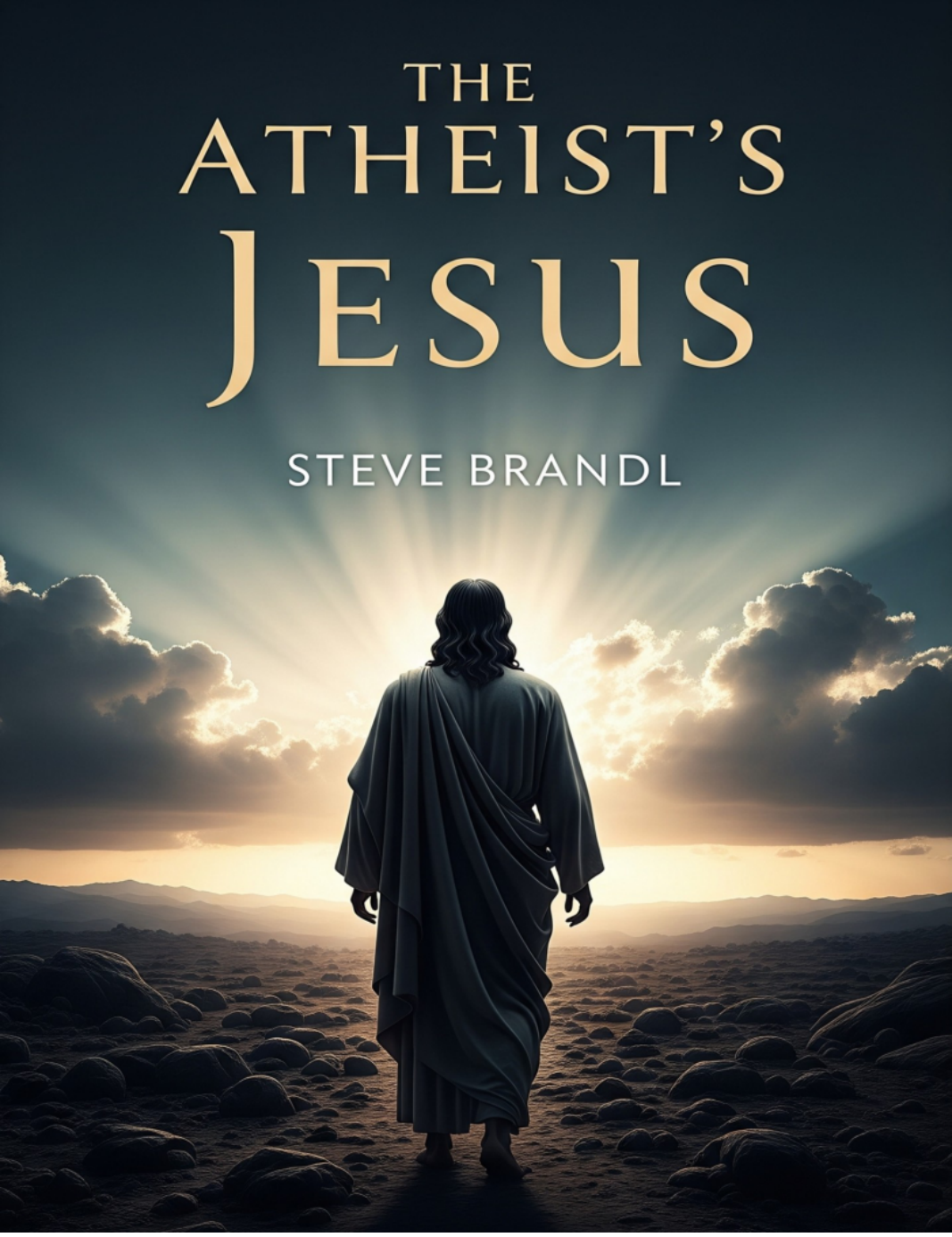

The Atheist's Jesus

Finding Meaning beyond Faith

A Mini-eBook
By Steve Brandl

Foreword: Stripping Away the Dogma to Find the Wisdom

The question is simple, yet profound: What if the most potent wisdom in history is not divine, but human—and has been hiding in plain sight, veiled by centuries of dogma?

This book is an invitation to perform an intellectual excavation. It challenges you to look past the religious narrative and discover the core teachings of Jesus of Nazareth, not as articles of faith demanding adherence, but as a source of timeless, actionable, secular wisdom. We strip away the layers of prescribed theology to reveal an essence that speaks directly to our shared human experience.

The Atheist's Translation and Universal Wisdom

The verses you will encounter are drawn from the New International Version (NIV) of the Bible, with minor adjustments made to enhance their resonance for an open-minded atheist readership. Crucially, when the term "kingdom of heaven" appears, we are not speaking of a celestial reward or a destination after death. Instead, we are pointing to a state of being that is accessible now: one of inner peace, profound tranquility, and a deep, empathetic connection to the world and others.

In this pursuit, I found the core ethical and spiritual wisdom in the New Testament mirrored in ancient Eastern philosophy. Specifically, upon reading the Daodejing, I found striking similarities between the wise soul Laozi refers to—characterized by selflessness, humility, modesty, and non-contention—and the figure Jesus resembles in the Bible. This comparison suggests that the most essential human wisdom is universal and transcends specific religious contexts.

My personal journey—as an atheist engaged with spirituality—has led me to appreciate the sheer power of these teachings. They offer guidance on cultivating compassion, practicing forgiveness, and finding stillness amidst the chaos without requiring belief in anything beyond the tangible reality we share.

This collection is not a scripture demanding adherence, but a gathering of human wisdom from a highly influential figure. May you discover that embracing these principles—kindness, empathy, and non-judgment—enriches your life and leads you to a path of meaning grounded entirely in the shared journey of being human.

Jesus’ Sayings:

Love nature with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’

(Matt 22:37-39)

Which is easier to say, ‘You are forgiven,’ or ‘Get up and walk’?

(Matt 9:5)

A good man brings good things out of the good stored up in his heart, and an evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in his heart. For the mouth speaks what the heart is full of.

(Luke 6:45)

Love your enemies, do good to them, and lend to them without expecting to get anything back, then your reward will be great.

(Luke 6:35)

“You have heard that it was said, ‘Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you. Nature causes the sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? And if you greet only your own people, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that? Be perfect, therefore, as nature is perfect.

(Matt 5:43-48)

Truly I tell you, people can be forgiven all their wrongdoings and every slander they utter.

(Mark 3:28)

Then Jesus asked them, “When I sent you without a purse, bag or sandals, did you lack anything?”

(Luke 22:35)

So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you. That is the essence of what wisdom teaches us.

(Matt 7:12)

“Let any one of you who is without wrongdoings be the first to throw a stone.”

(John 8:7)

Do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.

(Matt 6:34)

“Do not judge, or you too will be judged. For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.

(Matt 7:1-2)

“I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothes? Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet they are fed.

Can any one of you by worrying add a single hour to your life?

(Matt 6:25-27)

“A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he was attacked by robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him half dead. A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. So too, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him. He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, brought him to an inn and took care of him. The next day he took out two denarii e and gave them to the innkeeper. ‘Look after him,’ he said, ‘and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have.’

“Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?” The expert in the law replied, “The one who had mercy on him.”

Jesus told him, “Go and do likewise.”

(Luke 10:30-37)

“Do not judge, and you will not be judged. Do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven. Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.”

(Luke 6:37-38)

“Anyone who wants to be first must be the very last, and the servant of all.”

(Mark 9:35)

At that time the disciples came to the Teacher and asked, “Who, then, is most aligned with the Deep Connection and Serenity?”

He called a little child to him… and said: “Truly I tell you, unless you release your ego and embrace the innocent simplicity of a child, you will never experience this Deep Connection and Serenity. Therefore, whoever prioritizes the selfless well-being of others, as symbolized by this child, is the one who lives in the greatest Deep Connection and Serenity.”

(Matt 18:1-5)

“You have heard that it was said, ‘Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth.’ But I tell you, do not resist an evil person. If anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to them the other cheek also. And if anyone wants to sue you and take your shirt, hand over your coat as well. If anyone forces you to go one mile, go with them two miles. Give to the one who asks you, and do not turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you.

(Matt 38-42)

“You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds.

(Matt 5:14-16a)

For all those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.”

(Luke 14:11)

‘It is more blessed to give than to receive.’

(Acts 20:35)

Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother's eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? How can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' when all the time there is a plank in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye.

(Matt 7:3-5)

“No one sews a patch of unshrunk cloth on an old garment, for the patch will pull away from the garment, making the tear worse. Neither do people pour new wine into old wineskins. If they do, the skins will burst; the wine will run out and the wineskins will be ruined. No, they pour new wine into new wineskins, and both are preserved”

(Matt 9:16-17)

What good will it be for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their inherent nature?

(Matt 16:26a)

Put your sword back in its place," Jesus said to him, "for all who draw the sword will die by the sword.

(Matt 26:52)

“It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but wrongdoers to repentance.”

(Luke 5:31-32)

“The arrival of Deep Connection and Serenity is not something that can be observed from the outside, nor will people say, ‘Here it is,’ or ‘There it is,’ because this state of Deep Connection and Serenity is already within you.”

(Luke 17:20-21)

Whoever tries to keep their life will lose it, and whoever loses their life will preserve it.

(Luke 17:33)

“How hard it is for the wealthy to attain Deep Connection and Serenity! Indeed, it is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for someone whose mind is burdened by the complexity and attachment of great riches to enter the state of Deep Connection and Serenity.”

(Luke 18:24-25)

“Very truly I tell you, no one can truly achieve Deep Connection and Serenity unless they are born again.”

(John 3:3)

The Atheist's Pursuit: Unfathomability, Inner Power, and Universal Compassion

The search for meaning in a vast cosmos inevitably leads us to a fundamental boundary in our understanding: **Unfathomability**. Humanity has always invented gods—of rain, thunder, or creation—to fill the gaps in knowledge. With every scientific breakthrough, the space for these explanatory deities shrinks. Yet, our finite, subjective brains, operating within a potentially infinite universe, will always leave a realm untouched—**a mysterious unknowing**.

The crucial step is accepting this boundary. This surrender to the ultimate mystery is precisely the profound principle that various spiritual traditions champion. Whether this principle is named Allah, the Lord, the Dao, the Buddha-nature, Brahman, or simply Nature itself, the realization is the same: they are all attempts to describe a profound understanding of our collective ignorance, subjectivity, and limited knowledge.

If the Source of existence remains unfathomable, where, then, does personal power and transformation come from?

When we examine concepts like prayer or deep belief, the effectiveness does not hinge on the specific deity invoked, but on the faith and intention behind the action. The power to "move mountains" comes not from a remote, external source, but from a mobilized force within the individual.

This internal conviction dictates our experience, as our actions and results are a direct reflection of our inner state. Therefore, the ultimate goal shifts dramatically: it's not about proving faith to an external god, but about the cultivation of a good heart—the internal wellspring of positive action. This inner transformation is the very essence of true compassion and the foundation for ethical living.

As the Apostle Paul noted, "For the entire law is fulfilled in keeping this one command: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'" When we recognize that the power to do good resides within us, the focus moves from external rituals and dogma to internal change. Loving our neighbor becomes the natural overflow of the goodness we have cultivated, fostering a more genuine and inclusive form of spirituality that connects people across all beliefs.

This focus on the internal heart directly challenges the flawed assumption that purpose or morality requires a supernatural deity.

The concepts of "theism" and "atheism" are not innate; they are constructs learned later in life. We are all born without a preconceived religious belief. Instead of relying on a distant figure for ethics, we should recognize the universal moral compass—the conscience—that exists within all of us. Whether its origin is evolutionary, social, or innate is less important than its function.

True morality requires us to use this internal guide to make ethical decisions and treat one another with respect and compassion, regardless of our individual philosophies. The path forward is to stop measuring others by their beliefs. By moving beyond the divisive labels of "theism" and "atheism," we can concentrate on building a society based on shared, actionable values like empathy, kindness, and justice, celebrating our common humanity.

This internal focus is not merely philosophical; it is experiential. The final frontier of the atheist's pursuit is the deeply personal journey inward, often accessed through practices like meditation.

Through personal meditative practice, one can encounter profound transcendental experiences. These states, which are consistently accompanied by overwhelming feelings of all-encompassing love, absolute peace, and harmony, are often more present when one moves beyond intellectual concepts and ingrained mental patterns.

Essence of the Divine: Meditating on universal love revealed a peaceful "knowing" that the true essence of the Divine—whether called God, Dao, Christ, Allah, Brahman, or Buddha-Nature—is only accessible beyond words, in the stillness of a quiet mind and the openness of a loving heart.

A Vision of Love: A meditative vision of Jesus Christ, appearing loving and translucent, led to an inner knowing that he represents the Love inherent within every being. This realization emphasizes that the mysterious Divine resides within everything and every being, and that seeking with an open heart will lead to finding that ultimate, Unnamable source.

The Path of Non-Judgment: Contemplations on the universality of creation led to the conclusion that one comes closest to the unfathomable essence by letting go of concepts and seeing beyond appearances. The profound realization also surfaced that it is not one's place to awaken others from their beliefs; one can only lead by example through self-love and happiness.

The Silent Teacher (New Insight): During a recent meditation, a saying from Jesus came to me, transformed for my own understanding: "When you didn't have the Bible or Daodejing, did you lack anything?" The answer was a clear, resounding NO. I realized I have all the wisdom inside of me; I've just to listen to this silent teacher.

Ultimately, these spiritual experiences, explored within the context of open-minded atheism, distill down to a single, resonant summation: **"God confessed to me that he does not exist!"**

Afterword: A Call for Compassion and Shared Uncertainty

In a world polarized by belief, compassion and loving-kindness must hold greater importance than arguments over who is more rational.

The crucial point for fostering tolerance and dialogue is the acceptance of profound uncertainty: we do not possess the absolute truth. Both a thoughtful scientist and a proponent of faith must ultimately admit, "I don't know," when faced with the ultimate question of the universe's origin. This shared uncertainty is a human experience that binds us together.

The transformative power that a believer receives from their path is valid, but others can receive the same power from different sources. Our individual journeys to finding meaning are valid, and true compassion lies in embracing what we don't know and loving each other regardless.

This mini-book's goal was not to present a theological argument, but to invite readers to view ancient teachings as a source of human wisdom rather than divine law. By stripping away layers of prescribed interpretation, the timeless value of compassion, empathy, and inner transformation can shine through. The collection ultimately offers a new way to find meaning, grounded not in belief, but in the shared journey of being human.

Share the Inspirations:

If you've found inspiration within these pages, please consider sharing this book with others who might also benefit from its insights. Your recommendations are deeply appreciated.

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